



News & Notes

Mushroom Family Learning Center

1240 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
(412) 531-1225
mflcdirector@hotmail.com
mushroomfamily.org

IMPORTANT DATES / INFO

TUITION DUE DECEMBER 1

SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR - DECEMBER 7 AND 8

We are gearing up for reading with a Scholastic Book Fair to be held on Wednesday, Dec. 7 and Thursday, Dec. 8 in the dining room from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Do a bit of holiday shopping while your child is in class!

WINTER BREAK STARTS DEC. 22

Dec. 21 is the last day of classes; they resume on January 4. (Teachers in-service on Jan. 3.)

NO CLASSES ON MLK DAY - JAN. 16

January 16 is Martin Luther King Day - no classes.

IN-HOUSE REGISTRATION

Begins January 23 for the 2012-2013 school year.

ENRICHMENT CLASSES AND LUNCH

Spaces still available! Email Jamie at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

OUTSIDE PLAY

Happens every day if it's not raining and the temperature is 28 degrees or higher. Please be sure your kids are well prepared with coats, hats, boots, gloves, snow pants, etc. (with names)!

SHOES, SHOES, SHOES!

Please make sure your child is wearing proper "play shoes" especially on movement day. Preferred shoes for school are closed toe and have a back.

From the director...

Warm wishes to you as we start December together. Our Thanksgiving feasts were the perfect way to start the holiday season. It was so wonderful to see so many family members sharing this event with the children...I loved seeing the smiles of the parents, the proud faces of the grandparents, and the joy in the students to share this special day with you!

I have been sharing in the past newsletters a section called "When I Play I Learn..." We strive at Mushroom Family Learning Center to respect and value play of all kinds. While we are supportive of academic and skill-building activities in pre-school, we recognize that play is what preschoolers do. In our culture of competitive academics, it is unfortunate that preschool is the final place where play is available. We stand firm in our understanding and practices that validate the value of play. We truly believe children can learn without "leaving childhood behind."

We at MFLC would like to join in the spirit of the season and thank you not only for choosing our program, but also for the trust, support, and the love that is shared with all of us.

On behalf of myself and the entire staff, we want to wish all of our families a wonderful holiday season. We look forward to our time off during the holidays, however we will return with a warm heart and ready to look forward to a new year.

Happy 2012, and take time to play!

- Joan

Joan Harrison

When I Play I Learn...

When I play with sand I am learning:

- to exercise my imagination.
- concepts of size, shape, and volume, empty and full.
- how to use tools.
- to solve problems.
- concepts of warm and cool, wet, damp, and dry, heavy and light.
- how to play socially with others.
- to create systems for classifying, ordering and arranging—skills used in math.
- to create own patterns and symbols—skills used in reading and writing.
- to observe changes—a science skill.



A Big Thank-You to...

- Miss Theresa for the excellent job preparing our students for the musical portion of the family feasts.
- Our teachers for all their hard work to prepare for the feasts.
- Freya Blatz and family for their donation of Halloween costumes.
- Heidi Hess, former Mushroom mom and board member, for speaking at our November staff meeting about autism.
- To all our families who donated coats to the coat drive. It means so much to many local families in need. And to Joan Harrison, Joelle Schultz, and Diane Rattay for their help with logistics.
- David Donnelly (Miss Sheila's husband) for being our staff "fix-it guy."
- Kelly Lotter for raking leaves on the playground.
- To all our parents for the gift of your beautiful children.



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From the president of the board...

When I was planning my wedding, my mom asked me when we were visiting the florist, "What are we going to do for pew bows?" My response was to ask what my older sister had done at her wedding (I had a point for asking). My mom couldn't remember!! So my response to her question was: "Exactly. If you can't even remember what your own (step)daughter had at her wedding for which you were an integral part of planning less than five years ago, then I most certainly am not going to spend (your) money on a detail that I can't describe from a single wedding I've ever attended."



I urge you to remember this when going through your holiday season with your children and families. Put your heart and soul into the details that five or 10 years from now they WILL remember. No one will remember if you cleaned your baseboards or had fancy napkins, a designer dress or got the "hot" toy of the year. But they will remember the traditions, the warmth and love that they felt, the meal you made that included their favorites, that special gift that you remembered that they wanted but hadn't even thought to ask for.

THOSE are the things that make memories special. Not the pew bows that you spent way too much on and no one even remembers what they look like 30 minutes after the wedding is over. (I think I need to work on taking my own advice at times, too!)

I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season. It is an awesome time of the year to live through the eyes of a child. We thank you for sharing your children with us so that we may learn about all the different ways that we celebrate this season and see it through their eyes.

Happy Holidays!

- Erin

Erin Bignell

News from the 2s class from Theresa, Debbie and Marlene...

November flew by faster than the turkeys on Grandpa's fence! During this thankful month we filled our days putting feathers on our turkeys, talking in turkey words—gobble, gobble—and preparing foods for our mini feasts. It was an exciting day when the children donned their chef's hats and rolled up their sleeves to make muffins. As in any kitchen, the dough was flying and we were all covered in flour! Needless to say, the muffins were only for making, not eating. The health department would have cited us for sure!

We did get to eat our homemade pizzas though and they were mmmmm—good. Our "cooking" classes are meant to promote science as the children explore the process of combining ingredients and observing the final product. They add water to their dry mixtures and discover that they need both hands for stirring. Too much water makes it "soupy" so we experiment with adding different things to make the batter just right. We practice our counting when we see how many muffins we are going to make. All our ingredients are recycled from our leftover snack cupboards so as not to waste any usable food. We can tell that your children have been watching and helping Mom and Dad with baking at home by the many "shortcuts" they already know.



Pat the cat has been spending more time with us and even came as a new color this month: green! We like to count how many cats are in the room after she comes. The children also enjoyed their first fairy tale theater. Our first story was The Three Pigs. Everyone liked to "huff and puff" and watch as the houses blew away.

December will be full of sparkle. They don't call this the glitter season for nothin'. We all know glitter makes everything look spectacular! So, this month get out your dust busters... 'cause we're going to be really sparkly! We'll be matching mittens, making snow if there isn't any outside and making a present for our family. We will concentrate on the gift giving aspect of this wonderful season and enjoy the glow and excitement in your children's eyes. Marlene, Debbie and I would like to wish everyone a safe and wonderful holiday season. May it be filled with lots of sparkle!



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School delay/cancellation



MFLC will follow Mt. Lebanon School District in case of inclement weather. Note that when Mt. Lebanon calls for a delay, MFLC will also be delayed — not cancelled. Starting time will be 10 a.m. for morning classes and they will dismiss at the regular time; afternoon classes will begin on schedule. Please check local TV and cable stations, email blasts and the school answering machine when in doubt.

News from the 3s class from Jamie, Betsy and Liz...

Families are such an important part of our lives. They can be defined by those who share your name to those friends you have adopted along the way. During Thanksgiving it is important to be thankful for the people we love the most. Our class focused on past and present families in November. We created family trees and discussed the members of our family. We decided that pets and friends could be included.

We practiced our communication skills as we discussed the things we were thankful for. We described what our houses look like and then compared them to log houses and teepees. We discovered that the Pilgrims came over on the Mayflower and the Native Americans taught them how to live off of the land. We were amazed by how hard it would have been in the past where we had to grow our own food, gather firewood and collect water from a well. We even shared our ideas on what types of toys were made before Toys R Us was invented!

We baked muffins, corn bread and regular bread. We even used our muscles to make our very own butter. We ended the theme with our fabulous feast. The children did a wonderful job reading Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed and singing our gathering songs. We even shared all of the nursery rhymes we know by heart. The children were happy and the audience was impressed!



This is also the time of year when many creative play activities are taking place. The children are setting up their own tea parties with many different types of food to go along with it. They are dressing up in costumes and pretending to be princesses. They even give each other make-believe names. Many of the children are taking on the roles as mommy and daddy and then taking care of the babies. We can make anything out of play dough and build anything out of blocks. We are learning how to socialize with positive words. Friendships are developing each day.

Next month we will be discussing different ways to party. We will discuss different types of holidays and have a huge tea party. We may even throw in a dance party. We enjoy getting to know our students better each day. We love experiencing

life through their eyes. Thanks to all of our wonderful parents for donations to the feast, snack donations each day, and your continued support.

News from the 3/4s class from Liz, Brian, and Marlene...

We hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving! November was a quick but busy month. Our theme was "Feast: Family, Friends, Food and Fun." We culminated the unit with our own class feast. The children prepared food, made invitations, created decorations, and practiced performing songs for the event. It was great to see so many of you there! Thank you for your delicious and generous contributions.

As the children become more comfortable with our classroom and routines, they are becoming increasingly aware of each other. As these beginning friendships are forming, our focus has been on inclusion and sharing. We played several structured and semi-structured partnering games to help the children practice the emerging social skills necessary for finding friends. Those who need a little encouragement to approach a playmate benefited from learning specific phrases to use ("Do you want to play ____ with me?" or "Do you want to be my partner?"). As the children partnered with a variety of peers for different activities, they also had the chance to connect with someone they might not have played with before.



The classic game of "Ring around the Rosy" has become a favorite of the class. They have really adopted it as their own! We love to see how, when someone initiates the game, others have learned how to join in, and those already playing have learned always to welcome a new friend who wants to play. An important motto at Mushroom has always been, "You can't say 'You can't play.'" We are pleased as punch to see this spirit of inclusion taking hold within our classroom community.

We also cooked up a storm this month, both literally and imaginatively. We made pumpkin no-bake cookies and corn muffins to share with you at the feast. We also made vegetable "soup" by cutting up paper vegetables and putting them into a big pot. We made yummy looking paper cookies with



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Welcome Future MFLC Preschoolers!

A few MFLC families have grown recently! Welcome little ones, and congratulations to your parents and siblings.



- ~ **Sean Louis Minarich**, little brother of Noah (4s am) and little Jude, on Oct. 26. Parents: Mary and Mark.
- ~ **Ryan Reddy**, little brother of Aaron (PreK am) and Nolan (3s am), on Oct. 28. Parents: Sheri and Mike.
- ~ **Leah Elizabeth Fawley**, little sister of Lawson (W-F Early Learners), on Nov. 4. Parents: Shannon and David.

sparkly “icing” and even used cookies to learn math concepts.

We had to have some fun with turkeys, of course. We read *Setting the Turkeys Free* and created our own handprint turkeys. We also created a turkey display which everyone in the class helped with.

We took a new approach to preparing for playtime this month. While it may seem like playtime is just for fun, for children, it is the way they learn. It is their work! It must be fun, of course, but it also follows a developmental path toward increasing complexity. As play matures, children manage increasingly rich and abstract representations of the world around them. We would like to help the children develop some planning and intentionality in their play in order to keep them progressing toward increasingly mature play.

The children now spend a few minutes before playtime making a decision about which center they’d like to play in and planning what they will do there. We have found that this step has increased the amount, quality and duration of purposeful play throughout the room. We are seeing more cooperative, role-based, imaginative play as well, with play scenarios continuing from one day to the next.

In December we will focus on our senses as we explore the sights, sounds, smells, textures, and tastes of the winter holidays. We will also put special emphasis on shapes and colors throughout the month. Thank you for sharing your wonderful children with us!

News from the 4s class from Cathy, Melanie and Kim...

November was all about getting ready for the feast! We hope you enjoyed it and saw how much hard work the kids put in to make it special. It was a terrific turnout of family and friends!

We started out the month cutting apples and added water and cinnamon in our making of yummy applesauce. As time went on, we practiced our entertainment for the feast (some of the kids LOVE to put on a show!), made cookie dough and pumpkin dip, and painted wooden turkeys. Thanks to Sheila who filled in

and helped the kids make their necklaces for the feast also. Balancing feast stuff with letter-of-the-week activities and other fun things was tough!



We did try our first game of Alphabet Bingo, which takes some concentration and patience. We will play that, as well as Number Bingo, often throughout the rest of the school year. All of these things help us to continue learning our letters and numbers.

“E” week brought a fun *egg-speriment* where we got to do some observing, plus some elephant artwork along with the big beach bag items. The children get better and better all the time with their words at sharing time. It’s really great to see.

In December we will try to keep things low-key as a respite from the holiday hustle and bustle. Please remember hats, coats, etc. (with names in them) to help in getting ready for chillier outdoor time. We’ll learn how children around the world celebrate their winter holidays, make a present for our parents, bake some cookies, use lots of glitter (of course!), and sing, sing, sing!!

News from the Pre-K morning class from Jane, Debbie and Brian...

November’s theme, “Families, Feasts, and Nutrition,” culminated with our Stone Soup Feast. We made invitations, cooked and made several different kinds of turkeys: hats; a large, group turkey; our “I am Thankful” turkeys with the 3-D, colorful “feathers”; and our 3-D brown bag turkeys! Throughout these processes, we cut, printed, measured, counted, tore paper, glued, listened to and followed directions! We were ALWAYS CREATIVE with our approach!

We listened to and comprehended several Thanksgiving stories while learning about the Pilgrims, Native Americans, and the abstract concept of what it means to be thankful. We still need to concentrate a bit more on the nutrition aspect of our theme, so we may continue that into the first week of December. We will then begin our new theme, “December Holidays/Family Traditions.” We invite you to share some of your family customs with the children. Years ago, when my 28-year-old



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Mushroom Wish List ~ If you or someone you know may be able to contribute, please let Joan know!

- Scooter board
- Little Tykes ride-on fire truck
- Clothes: boys and girls underwear, socks, pants, and tops
- Any adult musical instruments for Miss Theresa's music class

son attended Mushroom, I volunteered twice in December. I shared the story of the Advent wreath and that of the baby Jesus. We now tend to stay away from religious customs and "Santa" projects, but would be very interested in you sharing a favorite craft or story. We have already had one or two parents come forward. If interested, please talk to Jane.

We will concentrate on Hanukkah and Christmas, discussing the similarities and differences, and learning that people celebrate different holidays in different ways. Sharing and tolerance are woven throughout our December activities. During this sometimes chaotic month, we try hard to keep the class-



room atmosphere low key, emphasizing the importance of giving more than receiving, and the love it takes to create homemade surprises! We will end the month with a holiday party. If interested in participating, please contact Allison or Elizabeth, our wonderful room parents!

In the meantime, we hope your own Thanksgiving feasts were wonderful and that you remember to try to include your little ones in your holiday preparations. Let your child hang ornaments, spin the dreidel, make gift tags, or bake cookies. Try to take the time to walk outside with your child or read a nightly holiday story. You will enjoy the break yourself and maybe even rediscover the true meaning of the holiday season!

News from the Pre-K afternoon class from Cathy and Melanie...

We hope you enjoyed the entertainment and the food at our feast – we have a small but mighty group!

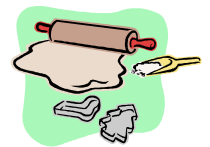
Getting ready for the feast was the major activity of November, starting with music with Theresa where we were turkeys, on a truck, doing the turkey dance and putting together a rhythm band. Next came the making of the delicious applesauce for the feast, along with a new batch of play dough for the classroom. Then pumpkin bread, dip, cookies, zucchini bread, cinnamon chips and finally, our "F" week *fantastic feast* soup! The kids have really been working on those math skills.

Thanks to Sheila and Cara who helped the children make necklaces for their feast attire. During "E" week, we learned about

the two sounds that "E" can make and also did an "egg-speriment" where we watched (and smelled!) what happened to our eggs after a couple of days in vinegar. There were also etchings along with some turkeys for our artwork projects.

In addition to the soup, "F" week found us making funny faces and fabulous flower fairies and sharing a lot of "F" items from home. The children are really doing great in thinking about and using their words in describing what they brought to share. We ended the month with "G" as our letter of the week.

After such a busy feast time and upcoming holiday time, we will keep things low-key in December. Some of the activities will include making a present for parents, baking some cookies, singing songs, and learning about how children all over the world celebrate different holidays. As always, lots of glitter will be involved!!



News from the K-Too class from Marilyn...

In November, K-Too cooked homemade bread and vegetable soup for our feast, learned to write and conceptualize fractions through experiential use of balance scale and measuring cups/spoons, created a play with set and costumes from Esphyr Slobodkina's book *The Wonderful Feast*, and learned the origins and history of Thanksgiving. Our feast was a great success. The children loved performing their play for their families, took pride in the soup and bread they made, and savored some healthy competition during rhyming bingo. Everyone had a wonderful time.



In December and January we will explore the holidays of various cultures: Ramadan, Diwali, Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. Each holiday includes light and caring which we will experience through mock classroom "celebrations" and discussion. The religious details of the holidays will be referenced, but not elaborated on. The children will make a special holiday gift this month and talk about giving.

Also in December, if there is enough snow, we will study the water cycle and volumetric/weight principles. In January we will begin our electric house project.